

POLICIES AND RESOLUTIONS

This document was drafted for the consideration of The Agriculture Option Association Council.

Policies and Resolutions Committee

1. The Agriculture Option

Policy

The Agriculture Option (TAO) provides Nigeria's young farmers and agriculturists with an opportunity to create market influence, improve productivity, improve returns, and rightly position to compete in a national and international marketplace. TAO supports the cooperation system and its ability to provide training for members and employees, encourage diverse participation in agricultural production and agribusiness, and educate consumers on agriculture. We strongly believe cooperation in agriculture and the rural economy should continue to receive economic support from the government and financial sector.

The Agriculture Option encourages diverse membership participation. Effective member communication, education and leadership development are critical for the future. We provide agricultural and business leadership development training and provide opportunities for members to actively participate in TAO's governance.

We support educational and research programs focused on TAO's areas of engagement, and general agriculture development, with a focus on enabling technology and digital capabilities as a means of engendering effectiveness of youth agricultural production.

TAO provides continuous professional improvement to its staff, members and collaborates with universities, research institutions and business, to integrate youth focused agricultural research to their curriculum and outreach respectively.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- Policies and interventions that are consistent with agricultural development and youth empowerment in agriculture and the general economy.
- Government and policy makers serving as leaders and advocates on behalf of young people in agriculture to encourage financial services providers and industry to support agricultural ventures and cooperatives promoted by young people.

- Effective support for young people focused agricultural cooperative programs within ministries, rural areas development initiatives, cooperative services, industry, including research, technical assistance, education, and grant programs.

2. Agricultural Economic Safety Net

Policy

Market-oriented agricultural programs that are focused on young people are essential to providing a reliable economic safety net to help young farmers and agricultural value chain participants withstand inherent volatility in agriculture production and promoting food security through cost effective programs. A combination and integration of youth empowerment focused policies and interventions; and agricultural production enhancement policies and interventions will be useful in developing and implementing risk management, trade, rural development, conservation, research, agricultural credit, food and nutrition, and energy programs that are beneficial to young people in Nigeria's agriculture and the general Nigerian populace.

Resolutions

The Agricultural option supports:

- Maintaining strong youth focused agricultural policies operationalized through finance and market access interventions and development programmes.
- Effective commodity offtake programs with reasonable program eligibility requirements. Insurance and social safety net programmes to manage risk exposure, participant health insurance, housing and pension.
- Timely and efficient operation of an offtake programme from young farmers and other agricultural value chain participants to guarantee off take of production.
- The Federal Government to play the role of market stabilizer to purchase produce from young people for strategic food reserve programs in times of low production margins.

3. Sustainability

Policy

The Agriculture Option is committed to protecting the environment through responsible farming, corporate and business practices that maintain the economic viability of farmers, agricultural value chain participants, local cooperatives, and rural businesses.

We believe that meaningful sustainability is farmer and agriculturist owned, driven, and supports their continued use and adoption of on-farm practices to increase productivity, while making efficient use of natural resources to demonstrate continuous improvement. We believe in the application of science and data to address environmental challenges while increasing agricultural and food system productivity.

We believe that the participation of young people in agriculture holds the promise of improving the adoption and mainstreaming of sustainable practices in Agriculture.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- Market-based, measurable and practical approaches to address climate change and other weather-related challenges.
- Risk management tools to mitigate the challenge weather plays in agricultural production.
- The supplies and development of new, cost-effective energy sources. We support the continued development and implementation of sound energy policies including robust renewable energy production in Nigeria.

4. Plant, Livestock and Animal Well-being

Policy

Plant and animal health are of utmost importance. The Agriculture Option promotes the right treatment of plants and animals including those for livestock and dairy production. We will support any industry efforts to develop sound national plant and animal care guidelines and to urge producers within TAO ecosystem to adopt these guidelines to ensure right treatment of plants and animals by all segments of the agricultural industry. We specifically support and encourage education of farmers, livestock handlers and other agricultural value chain participants through our education and advocacy programmes.

TAO programmes provide transparency to educate the young people and the public on modern farming and animal agriculture practices. In addition, TAO will encourage agricultural groups and producers to educate the public about modern farming and livestock production and promote the benefits of good farming and livestock management practices.

The Agriculture Option will consistently encourage Federal, State, and Local Governments; and their agencies to develop and implement programmes to stimulate the growth of farming, livestock, and dairy production in the best conditions. We will urge community development agencies to recognize that farming and livestock production is an important component of rural economies and to promote expanded youth focused farming and livestock production as a sound strategy for creating jobs and keeping wealth in the community.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- Sound farming and animal management practices, including mandatory participation and adherence to farming and animal care standards for TAO members and suppliers.

- Common-sense and practical rules for regulation of farming and livestock facilities that allow producers to safely farm and raise livestock without additional burdensome, costly and unnecessary practices.
- We encourage regulatory bodies to engage TAO members in policy discussions as regulations and rules are developed.
- To promote initiatives that promote and encourage more educated young people to engage in agriculture and more students to study agriculture in higher institutions while tuning their curriculum towards supporting effective and sustainable agricultural production in Nigeria with focus on digital capabilities.

5. Animal and Plant Health Protection and Disease Control

Policy

Timely prevention, identification, control and, where appropriate, eradication of animal and plant health diseases and pests are essential for Nigeria's agricultural production, food security, public health, animal welfare, and international market access. AgroCola supports enhanced federal-state collaboration and cooperation in program delivery to facilitate timely prevention, identification, control, and where appropriate, eradication of injurious plant or animal health diseases and pests impacting Nigeria's agricultural production, food security, environmental and public health, and international trade.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- Adequate funding and resources needed to maintain a robust state and federal animal plant and health infrastructure necessary to facilitate early detection, surveillance, response and control activities to prevent and mitigate both domestic and foreign plant and animal diseases.
- Recognizing the robust collaborative effort among federal, state, industry and academia in the prevention, containment and eradication, where appropriate, of domestic and foreign plant or animal diseases or pests.
- Enhanced coordination between state and federal government agencies to improve the nation's integrated plant and animal health response network through an integrated approach to prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.
- Establishing risk-based containment zones in the event of a reportable plant or animal disease or pest incident, and the expedited normalization of trade, once appropriate, to maintain commerce in unaffected zones and minimize the overall effect on producers and agricultural businesses while regional disease or pest issues are resolved.

6. Ownership of Landed Property by Young Farmers and Agriculturists

Policy

In recognition of the critical role served by agricultural land property in producing food and raw materials for an ever- increasing population, coupled with the pressure exerted against

agricultural property by private developers, state governments should deliberately provide agricultural land for young farmers and agriculturists. Public acquisition of agricultural property should only occur in rare instances, demonstrated by clear and convincing evidence that no reasonable alternative exists. In the event of a public acquisition of agricultural property, the calculation of just compensation to the agricultural property owner should take into account the fair market value of the property and any future increase in operational costs that will reasonably be incurred by the agricultural property owner as a result of such acquisition.

Resolutions

The Agricultural Option supports:

Creating easy access for young farmers and agriculturist to agricultural landed property and protecting the property rights of young farmers.

TAO opposes efforts by federal, state, and local governments and government agencies that unduly restrict access to agricultural land, farm practices or result in a taking of farmland.

7. Agricultural Credit

Policy

The agriculture industry is highly dependent on a continuing supply of competitively priced credit. The Agriculture Option advocates for policies that supports collaboration between lenders and youth led agricultural cooperatives and arrangements to provide credit products that are dedicated to meeting the needs of agriculture and rural economies in Nigeria in good times and bad. Access to a permanent, safe and sound source of credit that is owned and controlled by our partners and patrons is a prime focus of our efforts and activities.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports maintaining fiscal and monetary intervention in providing funding for farming and the agricultural value chain participants, to ensure that the agriculture credit system remains a reliable and competitive source of credit to farmers, ranchers, input and produce participants, agricultural cooperatives, and rural infrastructure providers.

8. Research and Education

Policy

The Agriculture Option supports adequate funding and other engagements for agriculture research programs and teaching programs. We participate in university research and education using data from farms and activities generated through TAO ecosystem, and we are involved in other cooperative research projects. TAO further understands that extension service plays an important continuing role in delivering the results of agriculture research and education to farmers and agricultural producers.

Resolutions

- The Agriculture Option supports funding for public agricultural research and funding for extension programs for sharing research.
- We will collaborate with secondary and tertiary educational institutions to educate younger agriculturists on the opportunities and knowledge inherent in the Agriculture Option

9. Water Availability

Policy

Given that good water is critical to plant, animal, and human health, The Agriculture Option supports policy that provides security to food and agriculture production by encouraging beneficial water use and support for the provision of irrigation where it required. When faced with making supplies of water available, policymakers should defer to beneficial need basis principles, sound science and technology during consideration for water availability interventions.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- Federal, state, and local actions to help farmers cope with drought conditions that impact agricultural productivity. Long term investment into irrigation, storage and other water infrastructure to mitigate future droughts.
- The development of water security in all areas for the viability of our producers, facilities, and communities.

10. Transportation

Policy

The effective marketing of agricultural products and reduction of post-harvest loss requires an efficient, modern transportation system. Private and government efforts should facilitate the efficient and economical movement of farm supplies, commodities, and food products on our waterways, highways, railways, airways, and the open seas.

In the immediate, effective transportation of agricultural goods requires improved availability of end of tarmac logistics providers plying motorable rural roads and aided by digital technology for improved efficiency in rural areas.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- Funding for rural transportation infrastructure such as feeder roads and provision of incentives on funding for rural agricultural transportation businesses.
- State and federal programs that address rural truck driver shortages through recruitment and training, technological advancements, and additional efforts.
- Removal of barriers constituted by local authorities in the provision of transportation

11. Rural Development

Policy

The Agriculture Option is committed to supporting programs that promote a strong rural economy. We favor development of programs that promote economic diversity in rural communities, create new jobs, preserve and modernize the rural infrastructure (including transportation systems, power, communication infrastructure, and waste disposal), and establish human services, (including education, health care, child care, and social services). We recommend using the cooperative model as a way to effectively and efficiently implement rural development programs.

We believe in expanding health care options for our member producers and cooperatives, individual farmers, their employees and families. We continue to work to help our members obtain affordable, comprehensive health care.

A challenging farm economy can bring uncertainty and stress for everyone involved. TAO believes in leveraging our collective structure to provide services like pension to support farmers in retirement, insurance when in challenging economic situations and health assistance to our members. The Members Assistance Programme offers resources to assist our members dealing with difficult circumstances.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- Funding for rural development programs.
- Expansion of adequate telecommunication and broadband access to all areas and especially farming clusters for the improvement of digitized and precision agriculture.
- Vibrant public schools in rural areas including access to quality agricultural education.
- Affordable, comprehensive health insurance options for our member-owners and those who work and support The Agriculture Option.
- Regulations, that provide more flexibility to offer health insurance coverage in multiple states to those in agriculture.
- Funding and coordination by federal and state governments, as well as industry partners, to establish stress assistance programs for farmers and ranchers dealing with difficult circumstances.

12. Beginner Farmers, Ranchers, and Agriculturists

Policy

Keeping farming communities and farms vibrant is vital to the future of agriculture, which includes involving the next generation of farmers and ranchers. There are several challenges that new and beginning farmers and agriculturists face, as well as transitioning farm operations between generations.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- Improving access to land, credit, tax benefits and other tools to address financial obstacles for new farmers.
- Engaging digital technology, digital learning platforms and digital monitoring, evaluation and prediction platforms to support the acceleration of new farmer knowledge through production and business cycles.
- State and federal programs that assist family farms in transitioning farm operations.
- Efforts to ensure that farmland remains available, accessible, and affordable to farmers.

13. Pricing and Marketing

Policy

Efforts should be made to improve standardization of prices of commodities at farm gate and along the aggregation chain with considerations for regions where production occurred and external factors such as logistics. In periods of glut and possible negative price movement, the Federal Government and its agencies should prioritize sourcing produce from youth led agricultural enterprises, as it purchases food for its feeding interventions and the strategic food reserve. This will support the stabilization of prices and encourage the young people to continue agricultural production. We support implementation of daily electronic reporting of agricultural produce prices as a way to provide producers with reliable information for market and price risk management.

We support the government's effort to improve the international marketing of Nigeria's agricultural produce and the implementation of policies that will improve the ease of export of Nigeria's agricultural produce overseas.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- Effective implementation, operation and regulation of commodity exchanges.
- The establishment of state agricultural produce marketing and offtake boards to encourage the off take of produce of agricultural enterprises promoted by the young people.
- The strengthening of strategic food reserves and their patronage of agricultural enterprises led by young people.
- The prioritization of off take of youth led agricultural produce by federal, state and Non-Governmental Organizations(s) food and feeding initiatives.
- Government's support of the international marketing of Nigeria's agricultural produce and the implementation of policies that will improve the ease of export of Nigeria's agricultural produce overseas.

14. Technology

Policy

The Agriculture Option believes that the application of science and technology offers great potential for improving agricultural production efficiency and a sustainable environment. New technologies using both digitization for precision agriculture and value chain interactions and production technology to support such elements as mechanization, storage and logistics has shown significant promise in improving Nigeria's agricultural production.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports

- The use of technology to support precision agriculture. The federal government and relevant agencies should support the provision of optimal connectivity and communication capabilities and capacity in farm clusters that has over 500 hectares. We believe that using the Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) for the deployment of connectivity capacity will support the deployment of sensors and technology capabilities that will improve remote cultivation support, monitoring and evaluation and will ultimately improve yield and quality.
- Improved regulatory coordination between federal agencies and private business to promote consistency with regulatory policy on using technology to improve financing, production, transparency and traceability in production and minimize unnecessary

barriers to finance and trade related to the regulatory oversight of access to finance, and quality products in agriculture.

- Intensified government efforts that provide a framework for investments, planning, and better certainty of technology development and research.
- The support for mechanization, irrigation and precision support technologies.

15. Nutrition and Food Safety

Policy

The Agriculture Option is dedicated to supporting young farmers and agriculturists to deliver quality, fresh, tasteful, safe, wholesome, and healthful agricultural products to their customers. TAO believes that our member producers have the right to make their own decision on how to best produce safe, high-quality agricultural produce using laws, regulations and standards from TAO and any accurate, scientifically based information regarding approved technology.

We urge for vigorous scrutiny by standards organizations and regulatory authorities on marketing claims for agricultural produce and vigorous enforcement against false and misleading claims.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- Working with federal and state agencies to establish a clear direction for food livestock, plants and farms to assure the safety of our food system. We are also committed to working with agricultural producers to improve on-farm bio-security measures.
- Reasonable, science-based regulations on how to help prevent the introduction of plant and animal disease or health hazard.
- As different government agencies develop programs and regulations for food safety and bio-security, we urge coordination of efforts. We urge special attention be paid to avoid duplicate levels of regulatory authority, regulatory inspections and procedures.
- Equipping NAFDAC and other authorities with the resources they need to help strengthen our nation's food safety system by making prevention from farm to fork the focus of our food safety strategies.

16. Promotion of Agricultural Products

Policy

The Agriculture Option will continuously support generic promotion and market research programs conducted by state and national promotion boards and industry groups. These programs are a valuable support strategy to TAO's own market development, advertising,

market research, and promotion. In addition, we favor programs to promote increased exports of farming and other agricultural products.

The Agriculture Option urges all segments of the food and agriculture industry to work together on consumer education to properly convey that Nigeria's food supply is of good quality and safe, and to help consumers understand that modern crop and livestock production practices are safe, humane, and environmentally sound. We also support reputation management initiatives whenever they are conducted by stakeholder groups in the agricultural value chains. We urge producers to actively participate in advocacy and reputation management programs and urge other commodity organizations to implement similar programs.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports:

- A coordinated and effective producer, federal and state funded and administered programs that enhance young farmers' viability.
- Minimize non-participants from benefiting from any such program without contributing to the financial funding required to cover operating costs associated with any such program.
- TAO supports and will coordinate producer-funded and administered programs to promote research and marketing for commodities.

17. Development

Policy

The Agriculture Option believes that leveraging on international development must be a priority for its engagement of international funding and international markets. Furthermore, we believe that partnership with international development efforts should be at the center of Nigeria's engagement in Africa as Nigeria's economic growth could be linked to Africa's prosperity, especially the West African sub region. We are particularly supportive of market-driven agricultural and food systems development efforts that generate economic growth, alleviate poverty, enhance food security and improve health and nutrition around Africa.

We support a balanced approach to support that promotes agricultural market development and provides economic growth opportunities for young farmers, input and service providers, processors, and small and growing businesses, while remaining sufficiently nimble to address natural and man-made emergencies that arise. We support the increased use and promotion of public-private partnerships, especially with cooperatives and Nigerian agribusinesses, to increase resource mobilization and efficiency, impact and sustainability of Nigeria's foreign assistance.

We strive for better coordination among local and international support institutions working in Nigeria's agriculture, especially by supporting access to better funding and technical support for Nigeria's agriculture and access to regional and international markets for Nigeria's produce.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports

- Nigeria's investment and efforts in agriculture focused international development especially in the West Africa
- The important and meaningful work of International Development Agencies in the development of agricultural capabilities and funding of agricultural enterprises in Nigeria.
- We will engage International Development Agencies to facilitate our access to regional and international markets.
- We will provide data and a platform for International Development Agencies to implement their initiatives and interventions in Nigeria.

18. Trade

Policy

The Agriculture Option believes it is the obligation of the Nigerian government to be a vigorous advocate for Nigerian farmers and agribusiness, and to develop mutual strategies for new trade agreements that will assure success of Nigeria's agriculture in world trade and expanded markets for agricultural products.

We support continued Nigeria membership of regional and global organizations and arrangements that will open new, profitable markets for Nigerian food and agricultural exports by ensuring that countries allow greater access for Nigeria's produce.

We urge that Africa Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) Agreement negotiators to establish trade agreements that increase agricultural product exports and do not adversely affect the overall market for Nigeria's agricultural products or hinder the ability to provide an effective safety net for producers; minimize any disruptive impacts that additional agricultural product and animal imports could have on producers, consumers and the domestic market; aggressively implement trade rules in ways that benefit Nigerian producers and food companies.

We support using bilateral and multilateral trade talks to remove barriers to agricultural product trade for existing markets and to allow expansion into new markets.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports

- Improved import substitution for agricultural produce in Nigeria
- Ratification of new trade agreements if they support Nigeria's agriculture and dairy exports.
- Voluntary, farmer-funded programs that increase international sales of agricultural products.
- Maintaining or improving existing trade agreements.
- Utilizing the ACFTA to help develop permanent commercial markets.

19. Taxes

Policy

The Agriculture Option urges the Federal Government to continue to allow tax incentives to remain in agricultural operations and inclusion of agriculture categories in the Pioneer Status Incentives. We also support corporate tax provisions that help our business, member producers and member cooperatives grow.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports

- Tax policy that recognizes the unique relationship between agricultural cooperatives and their farmer owners but does not create an unintended imbalance and multiple taxation.
- Sustaining agricultural tax incentives and to ensure no tax increase for farmers, cooperatives or their members.
- The choice of cash-based accounting for agriculture.

20. Workplace

Policy

The Agriculture Option supports the inclusion of organized agriculture in national social security arrangements especially for pension, health insurance and housing. TAO will actively participate in developing templates for healthy and vibrant work environments that follow labour laws and provisions in its member farms and workplaces and will actively participate in consideration for workforce-related pieces of legislation. Our goal is to achieve policies and regulations that allow our companies, the cooperative system, and farmer members to grow and provide the most value for our members, customers, and employees in great places of work.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports

- The participation of TAO members and their workers in pension schemes
- Access to health insurance by TAO members and their workers
- Inclusion of organized agriculture in national social security arranged especially for pension, health insurance and housing.

21. Political Activity

Policy

The Agriculture Option is committed to legislative action to support the economic interests of the farmer-owners of the cooperative system, agribusinesses, and other participants in the agricultural sector. In pursuing these legislative goals, we urge the members of TAO to actively participate in grassroots programs that support effective, cooperative efforts. We continually work to form positive relationships with policymakers at every level of government.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports member and employee efforts to educate and build relationships with elected and appointed government officials.

22. Commodity Associations

Policy

The Agriculture Option believes that collaboration with Commodity Associations is important to take a common ground on the development of commodities and their value chain in Nigeria. The Agriculture Option will seek to have representation in all Commodity Associations representing the value chains that its members participate in.

Resolutions

The Agriculture Option supports

- The important and meaningful work of Commodity Associations in the improvement of the lot of smallholder farmers.
- We will engage Commodity Associations to add to the conversations for a robust outlook of the development of commodities in Nigeria.
- We will align with the operations of Commodity Associations wherever there are common goals.